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GOD'S GRACE.

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God."—EPH. ii., 8.

The salvation of men is the result of the divine nature. It is the effluence and the effect of the disposition of God. Whatever governmental theories may have hitherto been entertained, whatever philosophical explanations may have been made, the fact will become more and more apparent that the reason of men's salvation, in the end, is that the tendency of the divine government—which is but another word for the effect of the divine disposition—is to communicate everlasting life to men.

No exposition of Christianity will be abiding and effective which does not take into account the whole of man, mankind, and all the circumstances which act upon men. It is easy for us to form theories in the study, using those men about us who are the best descended, the best educated, and the most favorably situated, as our specimens; but no theory springing from Christianity will be valid and permanent which does not take into account the whole race, under all their circumstances, and under all the influences that have acted, and are acting, and will continue, according to the constitution of things, to act upon them.

What does ideal perfectness require a man to be? or, in other words, what does the law of God require of mankind?—for the law of God can be nothing other than the law of ideal perfectness. There is a law spoken of in the Word of God—the ceremonial law of the Jews; and, for the most

part, that is the meaning of the term as employed in the epistles ; because the apostles who wrote were writing to their countrymen, and were seeking to enlarge them and set them free from the old Mosaic economy. Then there is society law, such as men find all around them. But divine law—that on which we are to reason in determining right and wrong respecting life and the great events of the future—that law cannot be regarded as synonymous with the Mosaic law, or society law, or any other law than that of ideal perfectness in every part of man's nature. Such a law as this demands perfect conditions of body ; for the mind can no more act rightly without its connections in this world, than a steam-engine can go to sea without a ship's hull under it. We all know that the mind grows sick with the body, and grows well with the body, to a certain degree ; and though we may not be able to mark the limitations exactly, yet the general truth is universally admitted that the body and mind in our present circumstances so work together that one affects the other, that one is dependent upon the other, and that for the highest mental action there must be the highest bodily conditions.

The ideal perfectness which God requires demands the right use, under proper limitations, provisions and government, of all the appetites and all the passions which are put into man's economy. There is not one of them that is not in its central nature and purpose divine, wise and necessary, as a constituent element of humanity ; and it is the right use of them, limiting them simply to their normal functions and proper government, that is demanded by the ideal law of God. That law also requires that men should develop their right functions in right lines, and in right associations or company. And the education and predominance of the moral sentiments and spiritual elements which are in men is to be secured. The control of the passions, the development of the social affections, and the unfolding of the moral nature of man—these things are to take place in the light of reason, of the imagination, and of the highest forms of intelligence.

Now, consider that these things are to be accomplished in some sense against nature. Consider, in other words, that it

is not the tendency of a man's physical being to develop itself toward spirituality. The flesh tends toward coarseness, and not toward that spirituality which is the result of will, effort, and continuous influence. All this various development of the ideal man in perfect harmony and symmetry is to be brought about within itself. What that perfect harmony and symmetry is we do not know. It differs in different men, as will appear more clearly in the sequel. Every man is to be developed by that which is within him into a personal harmony; and what that personal harmony is, is to be found out by each one separately.

It also is to be continuous, perpetual. That is to say, we are to seek, not a mood, but a character; not a flash of feeling, but an abiding disposition; not some happy hour of inspiration merely, but a life. Through dark and through light, through calm and through storm, through battle and through peace, we are to seek abidingly a higher form of character which shall put all that is in us into harmonious relations with itself, and ourselves into harmonious relations with God and the invisible world.

Such is the law of God, such is the ideal manhood which we are to aspire to, and such is the substantial law by which men are judged, and are to be judged.

Now, let us observe the facts of men's creation, and of their condition in this world. If we take the old reasoning, and say that men were created holy, that they fell from their first estate, and that since the race has fallen it is to be treated as a race that has fallen by its own fault in some way—if we take that reasoning we despatch the question very briefly, but most unsatisfactorily. No such reasoning, however, can possibly continue. It is not true in respect to each individual, as that reasoning would lead us to suppose, that he ever fell in our great forefather, Adam, in any such sense as that. The facts of the individual experience of a person, or of the race, are to be accounted for on the grounds of divine arrangement, as much as the nature of the earth, or the laws of light and gravity. The theory that they depend upon the creative care of God is absolute and inevitable.

Men are born into the world empty. There is nothing of them in the beginning. There are germinant tendencies in them, there are undeveloped forces in them, carrying certain potential qualities; but those tendencies and qualities are at first chaotic. Helpless man, when he is born, is like a city sketched on paper but not built. Men come into the world nothings, though they come with the capacity of being somethings. The human being is an apprentice to all things that are manly—to all things whose nature is moral. He comes into life lower than an apprentice. He learns everything by the slowest and by the hardest. The eye learns to see. It was adapted to learn; but it has to learn. The ear learns, the tongue learns, the hand learns, the foot learns, the very body itself learns, everything.

It is not so with the animal creation underneath us. They at birth know all that they are ever to know, for the most part. Certainly, as you go down lower everything is created more nearly perfect. No long period is required for the non-intelligent animals to learn to walk or to gambol and enjoy themselves. Their apprenticeship is very short. And when you go below them to the insects, these are born perfect.

But men are born at nothing—at zero; and they have to come up, learning everything which pertains to their body slowly, by experimental steps, by tentative efforts.

When you rise higher than the body, the apprenticeship is still more apparent, and men are obliged to learn everything that is wise, or good, or gentle, or discreet, or excellent in any form, by a still longer schooling. This is in accordance with the divine constitution. It is not a mere accident of men. It might as well be said that men are responsible for the shape of their head, for its size, or for the character of their features, as to say that they are responsible for those conditions which bring them into life at zero, and which make it impossible for any creature that ever lives on earth to reach anything excellent except through certain stages of evolution. The most complex thing, the subtlest thing, the most difficult thing to be conceived of, is the development of a truly divine character in man. There is no other problem which is so intricate and so unreachable as the

harmonious development of a man's faculties to an ideal symmetry.

When you consider the intricacy of a construction like Babbage's calculating machine, it tires your brain and you give up attempting to form a conception of it. When you consider the problems which are involved in a great astronomical calculation, they are so many and so intricate that unless one has rare genius and long practice they are insoluble to him. But no physical problems such as these are comparable to the difficulty which there is in the development of absolute power and co-operative harmony in the ideal perfect man.

Consider the rawness of men, their rudeness, their weakness in moral elements, and their strength in basilar forces. Consider the circumstances under which men come into the world, and under which they have to play their part in the development of their character and in the fulfillment of the behests of God's ideal law, or law of ideal perfection. What is the preparation with which a man starts in life? Not only does he inherit from his parents, from his ancestors, all conceivable combinations of normal qualities, in all degrees of proportion, but he inherits these qualities in an endless, varying series; so that the first child that is born into a family is not the type of the second. In other words, the alphabet which spells out each man is found in father and mother, in grandfather and grandmother; and the lines which come down to the formation of each individual one, select, from long reaches backward, qualities in different degrees, in different proportions, and with different susceptibilities. Every man, differently, for himself, inherits, in varying degrees, that which comes down to him through his ancestors. So that one man has a large intellect, with small feeling; and another has a small intellect with large feeling. One man has radiance of imagination and no practicalness, while another man is stone blind in imagination and has excessive practicalness. In the same household one sings as a poet, and all the rest are mute; one is an eminent mathematician, and none of the others has any gifts in that direction. In the same brood of children, representing the same father and

mother, by various combinations of qualities, in accordance with God's law of heredity, there is infinite variation. So every man stands for himself.

In mankind the individual is a thousand times more characteristic than anywhere else in creation. Although the genus among men is well marked, the species under that genus are so distinct one from another that they would constitute, in any other department of knowledge, distinct genera.

It is true, also, that we inherit, at the start, morbid conditions. Some men are born with perfect health. Their brain is healthy. All the nerves that run out from it are healthy. Their heart is healthy. Their lungs are healthy. Their stomach is healthy. Their bone-system is good, and their muscular system is good. Each part is in proportion to every other, and all the parts work harmoniously. But right by the side of such a one, and born of the same father and mother, is one whose head is in great disproportion to all the rest of his body. Another is born with a good head and a good heart, but poor lungs. Still another is born with poor digestion.

Not only so, but some men are born with morbid appetites and with tendencies toward lust. They inherit evil propensities from their parents for which they are no more responsible than they would be for a club-foot, or for a deformed arm. In some the appetite for drink is hereditary. Insanity is born in some. There is every conceivable variety of conditions in which men are born. And they who study men most closely, those who are the best physiologists, are the most assured of the fact that we are born with infinitely different and varying proportions, not only of physical organs, but of moral qualities.

And yet, no man has a bill of items when he is born. No invoice comes with a man when he enters this world, saying, "Brain so much ; heart so much," and so on. The father does not know what is in the child ; the mother does not know it ; the child itself does not know it ; nobody knows it until the person finds it out himself, when he is shoved into life, and the school-master runs against it, and it is restrained ; or until the minister discovers it ; or until the man, stum-

bling this way or that way, driven by forces which he has not calculated, comes to a knowledge of it.

There are generic public laws ; and there are also special laws which apply to individual men, and which are required by each one for himself ; but where is there, in any revelation, or in any book of accumulated human experience, anything that tells a man what he is when he starts in this world blindly on the race of the ideal perfection of manhood ?

I am not exaggerating this ; it is worse than I can possibly draw it ; but the looking in the face the facts of the condition in which men actually exist is indispensable to the right understanding of divine grace.

Consider, also, the surroundings into which men are born. How blessed are they who are half-way in heaven when they sit in their mother's lap ! How many there are who have no such benign and sacred place ! How many there are whose parents are their perverters ! How many there are who are made selfish by their instruction, as well as by the hereditary tendencies which are in themselves ! How many are rendered base, frivolous, coarse, animal, and sensuous, by parents who are worse than no teachers, perverting their children !

Here are men who are born into life with nothing but capacities. They are ignorant as to what these capacities are ; and they exist in different men in such endlessly different proportions that no one man is a model for another. Then, men are frequently tainted with morbid conditions which are hereditary. And with these disabilities they are born into households where very little light or help is given to them. And not once nor twice, but many times, and in varying degrees, these facts characterize the condition of the human family.

In the very highest points of Christian culture and attainment things have been gradually growing better ; but in looking over the past, consider as you go back, and as the light grows dimmer and dimmer, what must be the condition, not of the comparatively few favored families, not of here and there a small circle who have been blessed in overmeas-

ure, but of all mankind, if the law of perfectness is enforced. What kind of a Christianity is that which takes no account of mankind? If there is any truth in Christianity, it must be a truth that covers the condition of the human family; it must be a truth that is able to solve all physical and social and moral phenomena; it must be a truth that shall meet, for instance, all physiological facts squarely in the face. There are men who will bow down with reverence before a text, but who will jump a fact. There are men who are profoundly reverential toward the revelation of God in the Bible, but who are most fractious and most presumptuous in treading under foot God's other revelation—the revelation of nature, and of actual human life. And when I look out on the condition of the race; when I see how they are born, how they are made up, how little they know about helping themselves, how little anybody knows about helping them, how ignorant they are, and how helpless they are; when I look at life as it undeniably is, I say that the theories which have accounted for these things are insufficient. We must have other ones; and other ones are dawning.

Consider what it is, in the best conditions, to come into life unformed and unbuilt, and to go on all the way through one's career with a law continually over one's head demanding perfectness—perfectness of body, with all its unknown conditions; perfectness of the basilar disposition, with all its fiery passions and appetites, untamed and untamable; perfectness everywhere, always, and under all circumstances.

To put a child that has never seen a horse, on some Western prairie, or on the Southern pampas, behind a team of wild horses first harnessed, and to put the lines in his hands, and say to this little five-year-old, "Drive them, or be damned!"—how cruel it would be! And yet, how have men harnessed human life, and taken creatures born of the fieriest passions, of the intensest natures, about which they know so little; how have they taken such beings that are ignorant of themselves, and put them behind themselves, and said, "Be perfect, or be damned"!

Suppose you were to take a grown man, who knew the ship-building trade, and send him on a raft to sea, saying,

“Build your ship while you are making the voyage”! What sort of a voyage would a man make on a raft which he was compelled to convert into a ship while making his trip on the ocean? And yet, is it not so with you and me? Are we not very much equipped with lumber, but not at all with a good hull? Are we not to develop ourselves, and make our character, while all the time there is above our heads—yours, and mine, and everybody’s—the imperious command, “Be thou perfect”?

Thanks be to God that there is such a requirement. Thanks be to God that so high a standard is held up before us. When I see how men come into life, and how they would destroy and obliterate all traces of divinity in them, I am glad that there is a law in the heavens which quietly says to them, “Be thou perfect, as I am perfect.”

Consider what forces society generates. Consider what massive institutions men find already in society, which they cannot go around, which they cannot dig under, which they cannot pass through, and which throw lights and shadows upon them, and influence them for good or for evil, as the case may be. Consider what currents there are, which are like gulf-streams, with channels already cut, that are irresistible to the strongest men. Consider how impossible it is for a man to throw himself out from under the influence of those who are around him. Consider the conflicts of society. Consider its rivalries, and envies, and jealousies, and deceits, and cruelties, and oppressions. Consider the wrongs that are perpetrated everywhere. And then consider that a man is put into society where these great forces are at work, without any sociological knowledge, without any chart, with only functional and educational equipment.

When I consider what the conditions are under which human life is to develop itself; when I look simply at the facts of man’s actual existence; when I think of the influences which are brought to bear upon the formation of men’s characters, I not only do not marvel that civilization has progressed so little, but I marvel that it has progressed at all; and on the theory that there are no forces operating upon mankind except the forces of nature, I cannot under-

stand how there could have been any such progress. The strongest argument to me of the divine government is the upward tendency, on the whole, of human nature. When I see what it is made up of, what its pull-backs are, and how few attractions and soliciting influences there are to lift men higher and higher; when I see how low its condition is, how void it is of holiness, how weak it is in its inspiration; when I see how little there is in it that looks toward right education and right development; and when I look at the destiny of the human family in the light of these things, it seems to me it is enough to drive to distraction one who has no other ideas than those which are gathered from men themselves.

Now, on the other hand, consider what the effect must be if men are to be judged rigorously by the law of ideal perfectness. Suppose there is, at the end of life, and above life, acting down silently through the spheres, a governor, who holds before himself, evermore, the conception of perfectness of character in man, and administers under that law, rigorously demanding perfection, being content with nothing less than commercial exactitude, and saying, "Pay every penny, or I will take thee by the throat, and throw thee into prison."

Consider where men come from; consider how they come; consider how rude they are; consider how weak they are in that which is good, and how strong they are in that which is bad; consider what their circumstances are, and what their surroundings are; then consider what it would be to administer an ideal law of perfectness over them. I say that if God himself were to impose such a law upon the race in their present condition, it would be an act of tyranny so transcendent that the human mind is not able to conceive of it. All the unreasonableness that we have ever thought of, all the injustice that we have ever dreamed of, all the infernal cruelty that Dante in his gloomiest mood of imagination ever conceived of, could not equal nor approach the immensity, the infinity, or the awfulness, of the conception of a divine government of Perfectness over such beings as men are, in the creative conditions of mankind. The more you

think of a law of absolute perfectness being held over this race, spawned on the earth, and apparently neglected, almost as the shad's eggs are in the river—the more you think of such a law being held over such a race, by one who says, “The soul that sinneth, it shall die;” the more you bring your moral sentiments to bear upon it, the more revolting it becomes to you. The more your moral sentiments are educated in the school of Christ, the more sensitive you are to piety and holiness, the more you feel the importance of moral goodness—the more is there raised up in your bosom a court of justice that condemns such a theory, the effect of which is to crush out the hope of the universe.

Upon this state of facts, what is indispensable to an equitable administration? It is such a compassionate and considerate Head as shall take into account what man is, what is the way along which he is to travel, what are all the difficulties which he will encounter, and how impossible it is for him to obey a perfect law, or to reach the ideal perfectness of manhood. In other words, it is indispensable that we should believe according to the representation which is made in the 4th chapter of Hebrews :

“The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight; but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.”

What an awful knowledge! and what an awful field! But what is the inference?

“Seeing then that we have a great high-priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not a high-priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”

That is the New Testament presentation of God. It represents him as standing over against the limitations, and enfeeblements, and wants, and necessities of the human race.

Man being what he is, if there is a revelation of a stern, exact God over against the condition of things which exists

in the world, which he himself has permitted, which has been going on from generation to generation by more than permission, by direct fiat—if there is a revelation of such a God, then we are all ruined. There is no light, no hope for us, and there can be none, under such a presentation of God. But the Bible does not present any such view of God. Says God, in the Old Testament :

“My thoughts are not as your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways. For, as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

Christ, in the New Testament, says,

“If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?”

In another place he spoke a parable to this end :

“That men ought always to pray, and not to faint; saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man; and there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; yet because this widow troubleth me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him?”

The unjust judge was at last persuaded to do justice by the importunate widow; and shall a man, and one of the worst of men, have a point in his nature where he can be made to do good, and shall not God who is infinitely just, equitable, loving and merciful, avenge his elect ones?

The presentation of God in the Bible is such as makes him to be precisely adapted to the condition which I have represented man to be in. Man is weak and sinful and necessitous; and God is represented as a Being who sits in heaven, adapting his administration to the human condition, because he is infinite in patience, all the time requiring perfectness, but continually bearing with men on their way up to perfection.

A man who is fit to teach art is a man who is himself sensitive to art, and who has patience with rude hands and clumsy drawing. His business, as a schoolmaster, is to wait

for those who do not know how to do fine things finely, brooding over them, and helping them. And if it is that to be a schoolmaster, what is it to be a parent, but to take rude, unlicked cubs in the shape of children, and bring them up out of vices, through all manner of rudenesses and crudenesses, by patience, by forbearance, by suffering, and by love, waiting till they become something by training? And how do we learn to bear with nascent beings, giving our thoughts for theirs, and our feelings for theirs, but by acting under the inspiration of the Spirit of God?

It is said that some birds pluck feathers from their breasts to make nests for their young. Some fathers and mothers, as it were, pluck feathers from inside of their breasts to soften the beds of their children. They bring them up little by little, from childhood to manhood and womanhood, making sacrifices for them all the while.

Now, when we are taught to say, "Our Father," to God, do we mean any less than when we speak of an earthly father? Shall a father on earth be described as venerable and lovely, and shall the Father in heaven be depicted as a Nero? Shall motherhood on earth be employed to represent all that is beatific and gentle and beautiful, and shall we adopt a theology that points to the omnipotent God as one that is harsh, cruel and repugnant, turning the universe like a vast mill-wheel that, as it revolves, crushes all that comes in its way?

God is a God of love. Nature shows it, we are told; and the best part of nature is human life, unfolded not only under the laws of matter, but by the Spirit of God. It is from laws organized into humanity, through intelligence, that we are to derive our conceptions of divinity. And I find in the Bible that—while there are terrible denunciations for voluntary transgressions—when mankind are spoken of comprehensively as existing in weakness, and as stumbling through the world, it is the mercy of God, it is the gentleness of God, that are held up to view. God so loved the world that he gave his Son to die for it; and there was opened through Jesus Christ a way into the bosom of God. The patient God; the just God; the waiting God; the long-suf-

fering God ; the God that will not suffer men to degenerate into animalism ; the God that is not willing that mankind should go down to brutalism and to matter again, but that ever quickens them, and vitalizes them, and raises creation up to its higher forms ; the God that will not clear the guilty, and that means to round out the world to beatific states ; the God that is full of love, and gentleness, and sweetness, and forbearance, and that is competent to brood the race till they shall come out into their true estate as his sons—that is the God who is represented in the Bible.

Now we come to our text. Some ministers take their text, and forsake it, and never see it again ; but this time I put my text at the other end, and preach toward it.

“By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.”

What is *grace*? It is that divine compassion which is infinitely higher than the sweetest affection that ever bloomed in mortal soul. That great kindness, that wonderful generosity, that unending mercy, that goodness, which is eternal and infinite in the soul of God—that is grace. Grace means divine disposition, divine beneficence. It is no trafficking quality. It is not a *quid quo pro*. What is it that the daisy gives the sun as a price for being allowed to blossom? What is it that now purples the orchard, and perfumes the field? Is there a bargaining transaction between the sun and the blossoms by which they are permitted to have light and heat? No. They are what they are by reason of the sun's free bounty. Bring the sweetest and most brilliant flower, rich with fragrance, and its testimony will be that it is what it is by the brooding influence of the sun, by which it is developed and perfected. And it is by the grace of God that we are enabled to be anything good. It is by his nature and disposition. It is by what he is inherently, and not by what he is hired to be, or coaxed to be. It is not by any fixed arrangement. It is by what he was from eternity. It is by his patience and forbearance and long-suffering. He does not reign for the sake of pushing men down. Neither does he reign in such a way as to let them go down uncared for.

His is not a weak love that will allow men to ruin themselves; it is a love which is determined to prevent their ruining themselves. Such is God's grace.

"By grace ye are saved through faith; and that not of yourselves."

No, no! not of yourselves.

If by *depravity* you mean that the whole human race are voluntarily as low as they are, I do not believe in it; but if by *depravity* you mean merely this, that the whole human race, by the very genius of their creation, by all their surrounding circumstances, fall short, every one of them, and all the time, of the ideal of perfectness, then there is no other truth more eminent or more melancholy. Nothing is more certain than man's low estate, than the degraded condition of mankind in the flesh; and it is by the work that is being carried on under the divine influence to lift men up out of their animalhood into the spiritual realm—it is by this that we become men in Christ Jesus. It doth not yet appear what we shall be. We know that we are going toward the stature of the sons of God, but what that stature is, what its lineaments are, we do not know. We are unable to understand what our disposition and traits will be when we arrive at the state of perfectness. We have no conception of what that condition will be when all those qualities which we are unfolding here shall be not only perfect, but united in a true spiritual manhood.

I remember very well when this organ was built. We gave up the lecture-room to it. The materials of which it was constructed were scattered about in that room. In one corner was one stop, and in another corner was another stop; in one corner was one huge pipe, and in another corner was another huge pipe. These things lay in great confusion up and down through the room, in the midst of all manner of dust and litter. And if you had taken one who had never seen an organ, and shown him the various parts of this one, lying inchoate through the whole adjoining room, how little conception would he have formed of the instrument as it now stands, brought to order and regularity, tuned, and under a master hand! Now, we are dispersed. We are full of crookedness. We are stops and pipes not yet brought to order and

regularity, and not yet tuned ; but we are being brought to order and regularity, and are being tuned.

Upon such a state of facts comes the declaration of Scripture, " We are sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be." What it is to be a son of God when one is put together and perfectly tuned, and when all is cleansed away that is useless or that hinders, does not yet appear. The time-element will be left behind, the body will be dropped, but the seed will be saved. The germ in the seed will go on and live, while the auxiliary parts will fall off. All of earth that belongs to us will sleep in the grave ; but all that in us which is susceptible of immortality will rise above the grave and continue forever. What that will be we cannot tell ; but that it will be unspeakably glorious we know.

This view of God which I give you does not relax the conception of man's want and weakness and sin, but it gives great force to the declaration that without divine help we are all lost. There would be more chance for a child whose mother died at its birth, even if there were no nurses and no friends to care for it, to grow to manhood's estate, than there is for men as they are in this world, if left to themselves, to reach immortal life. There would not be a child that would live on the globe ; and there would not be a man whose soul would be saved. If there were no divine care to help such weakness, such want, such rudeness, such rawness, such unfulfilled conditions, such undeveloped faculties, as those which belong to man in this lower sphere, he would perish utterly. If there were no divine grace nor inspiration, if there were not a thousand influences of God shed down upon men, they would be lost every one.

Do you say that this looking at facts instead of taking texts out of the Bible is turning to one's own reason, and that it is not right for men to trust their reason ? Well, I hope that those men who make this criticism mean something that is wise, for what they say is very foolish. Their words are foolish : I hope their thought is better than their words. Do you suppose that God gave us reason that we might tuck our head under our wings and not use it ? By what faculties are we to get knowledge if not by reason ? " You are to go

to the Bible," says one. Yes; but do you suppose that we are to get it by merely reading the text? When I read the Bible, I interpret it by my reason. Every man carries his own philosophy of the Bible, and interprets it out of his own knowledge and his foregoing states of mind.

Do you tell me that I pervert Scripture because I interpret it by the revelation of fact, forming my knowledge on that revelation? The revelation of fact is the revelation of God. When a man ignores fact, and tells me, without any recognition of it, to use my reason on the text, I resist him, because it would make me not only an infidel, but an idiot. Human life itself is of God, and society is of God; and both of them rightly studied and understood are authoritative, and are, I think, co-incident with the written Word.

Revelations of early times, and mediæval times, and our times, are one and the same, and they all point in the general directions of the want and weakness and sinfulness of men, and of the power and glory and goodness of God.

It is asked, "Is it not dangerous to teach men that there is infinite goodness in God, and that he is infinite love and infinite grace?" No. The presumptions are that we do not teach these things enough. I can understand how, in barbaric conditions, men may need barbaric conceptions; I can understand how, when men are not able to go beyond the barbaric monarchic government, the forms and symbols of that government might do them good in a certain measure; but when a man outgrows and rises above those symbols, they must perish with the using. The presumption is that our conception of God is drawn too much from the basilar side of our nature; too much from the animal that is in us; too much from things that are coarse and low. The probability is that we misapprehend God because we are not fine enough; because we are not gracious enough; because we have not moulded our lives according to the law of justice and kindness; because we have not a conception of that paternity which is represented by the suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ as epitomizing the divine disposition of one who serves rather than demands service, and suffers rather than permit men to suffer. This conception of God, which has been given

to the world by the Lord Jesus Christ, makes him to be sweeter than any mother, nobler than any father, grander than any judge, and more puissant than the most glorious king of ideality—God over all, blessed forever, because forever blessing.

Now, if there be those who are distressed at this; if there be those who feel their own lowness, their own hardness, their own ungraciousness and unilluminated condition of soul, I say to them, "Look up. You have a High Priest that is touched with a feeling both of infirmity and of sin, and that has been made an offering for sin in your behalf. You have a God who is in sympathy with you, who knows just what you are, and whence you come, and what are all the concomitant influences which are at work upon you. You have a merciful Father, who pities you. Better than the pity of a mother for her child is the pity of God for you. And whatever may be your want of encouragement, whatever may be your need of impulse or incitement, by the grace of God you shall have it." It is by the grace of God that we are saved. It is out of the fullness of the generosity of the divine inexhaustible Heart that we receive all divine gifts. It is from the hand of God that the supply of all our necessities springs, and will spring, until the race is disenthralled; until the whole divine scheme is perfected; until we are lifted above shadows and uncertainties; until we are taken away from this life, and we stand with open vision and with grateful heart to behold what was the meaning of our history on earth, and we lift up our voice, with all the ransomed, and say, "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever."

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

WE draw near to thee, our Father, not as to a fearful and avenging God, but as to a merciful High Priest, touched with a feeling of our infirmities, in all points tempted as we are, and yet without sin, and in full sympathy with those who are by reason of sin brought into sorrow and trouble. We rejoice, O God, to believe that thou art such an One as that, in thee, at last, the whole universe shall find rest. All the sorrows which we behold, receiving them upon hearts chastened and educated in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, do fill us with wonder and sorrow again. We look around, and we look forward, and there is no help for man but in God. We rejoice though thou seemest to hide thyself from us. It is we that are hidden, and not thou. Thou dwellest in the largeness and in the liberty of the Spirit land. Thou dost dwell with those that are perfect. We are yet undisclosed, hidden by our opaque bodies. We cannot discern thee with these rude senses, nor come into communion in full with thee even by that which hath been developed in us by the power of faith. We are drawing nearer to that land where we shall know as we are known, where we shall see even as we are seen, and shall ourselves be perfect in thine image. Grant us on the road some such glimpses of light, some such foretokens, that we shall be patient with the greatness of the way, and confirmed in trust as against our fears, and in love as against all our passions.

Forgive us our infirmities and our sins. Cleanse us from the power of easily besetting sins, and of inbred sins. Help us to cast them out, and manfully to contend against all that is within us. Grant that we may feel the inward power of the Divine nature working in us mightily, so that, day by day, we shall be conscious that we grow stronger in the truth and in things that are right and godlike.

We pray that thou wilt prepare us this day by its knowledge, by its devotion, and by its sweet influences upon the soul, for all the conflicts of the week upon which we have entered. May we learn patience and gentleness. May we learn to be strong without rudeness. May we learn to confide in ourselves with full faith, yet without conceit. May we learn without presumption to trust the providence of God, and the revelation of every-day life. May we seek, under all circumstances, to be thy children, bearing about with us the mind of Christ, the Spirit of the Saviour, under all provocations, and enduring steadfastly, knowing that the trial of our faith is more precious than the trial of gold.

Grant, O Lord, we pray thee, thy blessing to rest upon our households; upon the members of our families; upon any who are sick or weak. Grant that we may be restored to health and to comfort. Dwell, we pray thee, in every house where sorrow is. Be thou the Saviour of sorrowing souls. Bring them out of their tribulation, or sanctify to them their distresses. If there be those upon whom have come sudden and amazing afflictions which were unforeseen; if there be those who are overthrown and quite desolate from the suddenness of their great trouble, wilt thou be their Saviour and Deliverer. Wilt thou send thy Spirit to be their abiding Comforter.

Let thy blessing rest, we beseech of thee, upon all those who are perplexed; upon all those who are borne down by cares; upon all those on whom fall burdens which are heavier than they can bear. We beseech of thee that thou wilt grant to every one grace according to his need. May those who are seeking their way alone in this world, without God and without hope, be drawn to thee. We pray that they may have peace and help in their time of need. May they not fear him who is their Saviour and Deliverer. We pray for those who are wandering; for those who are outcast; for those who have made themselves willingly the slaves of sin; for those who have formed evil habits which despotize over them, and will not let them rest. Be around about all those who need a Saviour to seek and to save them.

We pray that thou wilt bless all the churches of this city. Strengthen thy servants therein, that they may do their work heartily as unto the Lord, and not as unto men. Look upon this nation, and upon its churches, and upon the institutions of beneficence which have sprung up under their ministration. Bless all schools, all academies, all colleges, all instruments of education. May the light be diffused throughout our whole population; and may they have it soonest who need it most. Wilt thou irradiate those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.

And we pray, not for ourselves alone, but for all the nations of the earth. Grant, O Lord, that the great brotherhood of nations at last may learn their happiness, their peace, their best good. We pray that war may die out; that all those passions from which war hath sprung may be curbed and restrained. May ignorance be driven away as the night before the coming of the sun. May superstitions and all cruel religions cease. May the whole earth come at last to the knowledge of God; to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ; to a knowledge of all the revelations of truth as it is in Jesus. And so may there be peace and gladness, and may the whole earth be filled with thy consolation.

And to the Father, the Son, and the Spirit shall be praise evermore. *Amen.*



PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

OUR Father, we beseech of thee that thou wilt draw us to thyself with fresh confidence. May we not deceive ourselves, nor seek to hide our nakedness, though thou walkest in the garden. Grant that we may come naked and open before him with whom we have to do, knowing that he is full of grace, full of help, and full of endless mercies. Deliver us from fear. Deliver us from disobedience. Deliver us from iniquity. May we serve thee; and be thou to us One whom it shall be joyful to us to serve. Cleanse our minds from prejudice. Take away that ignorance which separates between thee and us, and bring us near that we may have the feeling of sons, and rejoice in thee as our Father. And to thy name shall be the praise, Father, Son, and Spirit. *Amen.*

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